

Train kindy teachers too

Fatimah: Move augurs well for emotional development of dyslexic children at early stage

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KUCHING: Sarawak hopes that a proposed training to recognise learning disabilities like dyslexia in students be extended to kindergarten teachers.

Welfare, Woman and Family Development Minister Datuk Fatimah Abdullah believed the earlier the intervention, the better it was for the child's academic and emotional development.

"The Education Ministry is working towards creating a module for trainee teachers to spot the symptoms of learning disability like dyslexia among students so that the right intervention can be given.

It is not good for their emotional and academic development. I had a case before of a girl who tried and tried in class but still she could not understand why she was falling behind.

— DATUK FATIMAH ABDULLAH

"Ideally, it should include pre-school and kindy teachers too because the earlier the intervention, the better," she said at the close of the Rope Skipping Competition 2013 of the Dyslexia Association of Sarawak at the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) here yesterday.



Towards creating awareness: Fatimah receiving a gift from the Dyslexia Association of Sarawak president Dr Ong Puay Hoon as Unimas Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences volunteer unit head Husna Rosli (left) and State Welfare director Noriah Ahmad look on.

However, she said she wasn't sure when the ministry would implement the module.

In the meantime, she said, the association had held a workshop for teachers at the Sarawak Teacher Training Institute in Miri and the institute had also held a similar programme for its trainee teachers.

The workshop focuses on how to recognise learning disabilities among students.

Fatimah, who is advisor to the association, said children with learning disabilities like dyslexia were often misjudged.

"Some may even be labelled as lazy and often punished for this. It is not good for their emotional and academic development. I had a case before of a girl who tried and tried in class but still she could not understand why she was falling behind," she said.

She urged that all teachers and not only those who were trained to teach special children be given the training, adding that this required close collaboration between the education and health departments.

On the event, Fatimah said a simple activity like rope skipping could

actually do wonders for children with dyslexia and other learning disabilities.

She said many of them struggled to synchronise the rhythmic and sequential movements of the arms and feet.

She said rope skipping was also a good activity to stay fit.

"We need to keep ourselves active especially when Malaysia has been said to be the 'fattest' country and 15% of those below 18 years old are suffering from obesity.

"That is not good news at all for obesity is a precursor for other ill-

nesses. So I hope many would take up skipping and move towards a healthier lifestyle," she added.

The event was a collaboration between the Dyslexia Association of Sarawak, State Social Welfare Department, Medical and Nursing Students Society (Unimed) of the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Unimas, State Sports Council and the Special Olympics Sarawak (Kuching Chapter).

The competition was participated by 43 children and young adults with learning disabilities, six with hearing impairments, 17 dyslexic, eight teachers and care providers.